



THE QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA



THE BOOK CLUB OF CALIFORNIA is a non-profit membership organization founded in 1912. It supports the art of fine printing related to the history and literature of California and the West through research, publishing, public programs, and exhibitions. The Club is limited to 1,250 members, and membership in the Club is open to all. Annual renewals are due by January 1 of every year. Memberships are: Regular, \$95; Sustaining, \$150; Patron, \$250; Sponsor, \$500; Benefactor, \$1,000; Apprentice, \$35; and Student, \$25. All members receive the *Quarterly News-Letter* and, except for Apprentice and Student members, the Annual Keepsake. All members have the privilege—but not the obligation—of buying Club publications, which are limited, as a rule, to one copy per member until remaining quantities are released for purchase of additional copies. All members may purchase extra copies of keepsakes or *QN-Ls*, when available. Portions of membership dues—in the amount of \$36 for Regular members, \$91 for Sustaining members, \$191 for Patrons, \$441 for Sponsors, and \$941 for Benefactors—are deductible in accordance with the Internal Revenue Code, as are donations, whether monetary or in the form of books. The Book Club of California's tax-exempt number is 42-2954746.

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FOOD & WINE & GOOD DESIGN:
THE CALIFORNIA FINE PRINTERS' LEGACY
by Randall Tarpey-Schwed



An excerpt from Randall's talk delivered at the opening of the Book Club of California's fall 2014 exhibition, *Food & Wine & Good Design: The California Fine Printers' Legacy*,
Monday, September 15, 2014

The Book Club of California has been a leader for over one hundred years in promoting fine printing, the book arts, and the literature and history of California, and that tradition continues in a meaningful way with this fall's exhibition, *Food & Wine & Good Design: The California Fine Printers' Legacy*.

The materials on display include over one hundred and fifty items related to food, wine, or gastronomical literature that were printed, designed, or published in California. Among the first items that are recorded on the checklist that accompanies the exhibition is *The Vintage Festival: A Play Pageant & Festivities Celebrating the Vine in the Autumn of Each Year at St. Helena in the Napa Valley* by Sara Bard Field. That small volume was printed in 1920 by John Henry Nash, one of the founders of the Book Club of California, as the Club's sixth publication. Fittingly, the very last item on the checklist was also printed by the Club, the 2008 exhibition keepsake titled *A Delicious Obsession*, which was designed by Club member Kathleen Burch, printed letterpress by Patrick Reagh, and gorgeously illustrated by Patricia Curtan, whose other distinguished work includes illustrating many Chez Panisse cookbooks. And the Club's gastronomic fine printing connection is continuing with this year's annual members' keepsake, *Plate by Plate: California Recipes from the Gold Rush through "California Cuisine,"* which will feature twelve recipes from historic California cookbooks, designed and printed letterpress by Peter Koch, with commentaries by ten distinguished culinary historians and food writers, and original illustrations by Christopher Carroll.

But why should the Book Club of California have any interest in gastronomy, and what exactly is it that ties together the items in this

exhibition? The answer to the first question is simple: It is impossible to construct a complete history of California without considering the role that food and wine have played in the state's development. And that impact is reflected not just in the historical forces that shaped the state—factors such as the state's agricultural abundance, its status as an immigrant magnet, and the general openness of its residents to new ideas, including gastronomical ideas—but also in the state's literature. Consider how anemic the literary legacy of our writers would be, for example, without Frank Norris's portrayal of the plight of the state's wheat farmers against the Southern Pacific Railroad in *The Octopus*, without John Steinbeck's description of the Monterey fishing industry in *Cannery Row*, or without Idwal Jones's novel *The Vineyard*, which takes us back to the Napa Valley of the late nineteenth century. And consider how much poorer our literary legacy would have been without that daughter of a Whittier newspaperman named M.F.K. Fisher, who, by inventing the genre of the food memoir, taught us that there is more than a communion of our bodies when bread is broken and wine is drunk.

However, there's another thing that ties together the objects in this exhibition besides their California connection, and that is the concept of "craft." A well conceived design, a carefully typeset and printed page, and a beautifully drafted illustration can elevate a book or other printed material from the mundane to the spectacular, but that elevation requires a commitment to one's craft. *Food & Wine & Good Design: The California Fine Printers' Legacy* features over a century of fine craftsmanship by some of California's most accomplished practitioners of the printing arts.

And this concept of commitment to one's craft applies to the gastronomic arts as well. Food is essential to survival, but food needn't be *fine* to keep you alive. The forty-niners managed to survive on hard-tack and bacon. However, the fine cook's and wine-maker's commitment to craft also elevates *their* product from the mundane to the sublime, and in that regard, there isn't a state in the union that has had more influence in elevating the gastronomic arts than California.

In 1906, May Southworth celebrated the state's New World food products such as chiles, corn, and tomatoes by writing *One Hundred & One Mexican Dishes*, the first book published in English in California that

was solely dedicated to Mexican dishes. That title, which was published by the San Francisco bookseller Paul Elder under his Tomoye Press imprint, was enhanced by the fine craftsmanship of John Henry Nash, who designed and typeset the book, along with ten others in Elder's 101 Epicurean Thrills series.

In 1940, Jane Grabhorn likewise celebrated the art and craft of Mexican Cuisine by publishing Doris Aller's *The Epicure in Mexico*, as well as other titles focused on the equally "exotic" Hawaiian and Russian cuisines, as part of her Colt Press Epicure series. Grabhorn enlisted the immense talents of Mallette Dean to execute hand carved illustrations and ornaments that grace the pages of those books, and in so doing she elevated them from mere practical volumes of cookery to works of art.

The state's cooks have long been open to culinary influences from abroad, but it wasn't until the 1950s that a cogent and well-researched philosophy of a uniquely Californian Cuisine came into being. Helen Evans Brown was the first serious kitchen scholar to adequately explore that concept, and her *West Coast Cook Book*, published in 1952, was widely praised. When Brown decided she wanted to publish her own cookbooks, she looked to her Pasadena neighbors Ward Ritchie and Grant Dahlstrom, whose commitment to their craft of printing, she knew, would match her own commitment to elevating the cuisine of California. The result of those collaborations gave us two noteworthy, finely designed and illustrated volumes that won American Institute of Graphic Arts Fifty Books of the Year awards. Helen's *Chafing Dish Book*, which was designed and printed letterpress by Ward Ritchie in 1950, was bound in an innovative, square format, and printed with just a single recipe to a page. The placement of just one recipe per page was a revolutionary concept at the time, but has since been widely adopted as the most elegant way to present recipes in cookbooks. Brown's 1951 title *Some Oyster Recipes* was printed on an Albion Hand Press by Grant Dahlstrom and illustrated by Harry O. Diamond.

The transformation of California into a global influencer of gastronomic values may have had its genesis in Berkeley in 1971. And from the moment that Alice Waters opened her now legendary restaurant Chez Panisse, she engaged wonderful practitioners of the printing arts whom

she knew would apply the same commitment to their craft in designing and creating menus, posters, and cookbooks as she and her chefs applied to their craft in the kitchen. These craftspeople have included David Lance Goines, Patricia Curtan, and Wesley Tanner, each of whom has enjoyed an illustrious career practicing design and fine printing.

And finally it's important to recognize those California printers like Andrew Hoyem and Carolyn and James Robertson who undertook the enormous commitment required to take the greatest examples of gastronomic literature and match them with specially commissioned artwork, letterpress printing, fine papers, and hand binding to create truly sumptuous gastronomic *livres d'arts*. In 1994, Hoyem's Arion Press issued the spectacular, folio-sized edition of Brillat-Savarin's *The Physiology of Taste*, illustrated with nine color lithographs and over two hundred drawings by Wayne Thiebaud. The Robertsons' Yolla Bolly Press also issued a number of titles with a gastronomic theme, each of which included specially commissioned artwork. Two of the most beautiful Yolla Bolly titles are M.F.K. Fisher's *Two Kitchens in Provence* with drawings by Ward Schumaker (1999), and Idwal Jones's *The Adventures of Chef Gallois* with color illustrations by Milton Glaser (2000).

The items on display in *Food & Wine & Good Design: The California Fine Printers' Legacy* are reflections of a profound commitment to craft, and it is fitting that those talents should have been applied to create books, broadsides, and menus that celebrate both the state's culinary influence and the commitments that many of California's practitioners of the gastronomic arts applied to their own craft.

Food & Wine & Good Design will be on display at the Club through December 8, 2014.

Randall Tarpey-Schwed is a bibliophile, collector, and independent researcher with a special interest in gastronomy. He curated the Club's fall 2014 exhibition, *Food & Wine & Good Design: The California Fine Printers' Legacy* and the Club's 2008 exhibition *A Delicious Obsession*. He is the co-author of M.F.K. Fisher: An Annotated Bibliography.

RED WINE & CHOCOLATE

by Richard Seibert

The Book Club's *Quarterly News-Letter* has passed through the hands of many printers. From 1982 until 1990 it was designed and printed by the team of Wesley Tanner and Will Powers. When Will died in 2009, *A Tribute to Will Powers* was published by his co-workers. Their tribute to this remarkable man was remarkable itself in that it gave almost equal weight to memories of Will the baker as to Will the typographer.

My career, too, is now split exactly in half along this divide: I was a professional cook for twenty years, and now I have been a professional printer for twenty years. When I tell this story people often ask whether it was difficult to make the transition between two such different careers.

In my own small circle I count many printer-cook combinations: Steve Crumley, the host at Café Chez Panisse, worked for many years at the *New York Times*, and Patty Curtan, the talented chef and illustrator of many of the Chez Panisse cookbooks, was one of my mentors both when I was learning to cook and when I was learning to print. Fritz Streiff was a cook and host for many years as well as cookbook writer and menu typographer, and *Fine Print* editor E.M. Ginger, who learned how to set type at the Stinehour Press in Vermont, is also known for cooking amazing dinners long before the "pop-up" became faddish. Alice Waters takes the design and calligraphy of the Chez Panisse daily menu almost as seriously as she takes the day's food.

So it seems very natural to me that the skills of printing and cooking are often found in the same person. So natural, in fact, that they seem to be the same activity practiced in different mediums but working toward the same end: they both answer a hunger; they both feed us.

Any hunger can be fed mechanically, to simply fill need, but every hunger can also be fed aesthetically, for the sake of pure delight. The difference is in the degree of awareness we bring to what we are doing. This is as true of cooking as it is of printing. Each activity provides an opportunity to engage with the world we find in a way that returns the favor and changes us. It is as simple as paying attention.

Attention to detail is rewarded by memory, and memories allow us to compare experiences, which in turn allows us to imagine how things could be. Our “taste” is the sum of all our tastings, and the richer a history we have, the more tools we bring to the task.

Both printing and cooking are trades, but if we practice them consciously we raise them to the level of art. I do not understand those who do not cook daily, and I do not understand those who do not want to make things beautiful. Tasting what you eat makes you want to cook, and seeing what you read makes you want to print.

Most times it is the simplest things that are the hardest to learn. It is surprising how difficult it is to convince young cooks to taste their ingredients as they cook. Similarly, those new to design believe the work involves choosing typefaces, but design doesn’t even begin until long after the typeface has been chosen.

The novice cook thinks *puttanesca* is the mixing of tomatoes and capers with anchovies and olives. But this is just where a *puttanesca* begins. What tomatoes do we have *here*, right now? What do *these* anchovies taste like? How is *this* year’s pressing of olive oil? How did *these* olives cure? You have to listen, and the ingredients will tell you. The typographic-printer who honors the text is like a cook who tastes his ingredients. Their job is the same: to bring the essential out from the particular. You respond to what you have in hand, and everything you’ve designed before, cooked before, all the ingredients, will tell you where to go next, nudging, making suggestions, even cajoling you in the correct direction.

Neither the cook nor the typographic-printer makes things out of nothing. We take things as they are and then—guided by both attention and memory—adjust, balance, improve. We accentuate virtues and minimize flaws to make a more pleasing whole.

Two different cooks using the same ingredients will prepare two completely different dinners, and two separate typographic-printers setting the exact same text will come up with two entirely different designs.

At the end of many recipes is the enigmatic and sometimes frustrating instruction to “adjust seasoning,” as if these two words alone could wave a magic hand across whatever it is you are cooking and give it the quality of “deliciousness.” But there is a catch-22 to reading recipes: just

as you cannot learn how to cook until you've read recipes, so you cannot really read recipes until you know how to cook. You are left standing in the same place, but there is no other place to begin except where you are. The place to begin is not to try to do, but to be aware of where you are, and then, listening and remembering, to imagine.

When you "adjust seasoning" you remember what salt does, how vinegar sharpens flavors, and how olive oil smooths them. And if you are an experienced cook, you remember which pressing of which olive oil does what.

It is the same with mixing ink to achieve a color. If you look at the green you are mixing long enough, you start to see not green, but both the blue and the yellow at the same time. It is like being able to hear the woodwinds and the strings in a piece of music separately, yet simultaneously. In cooking, it is like noting the acrid quality of a particularly green cold-press olive oil, and hearing how lemon juice will simultaneously foil, complement, and extend that sensation.

It is all the same job, that of bringing out the essential from the particular, so it makes complete sense that there is so much crossover between cooking and typographic-printing. Cooks are eaters who have paid attention to their dinners, and typographic-printers are readers who have responded fully to the text on the page. This attention, combined with remembrance and imagination, makes us alive to pleasure. Both printers and cooks feed people not only to nourish their bodies and minds, but also to delight them. Hold red wine and chocolate on your tongue together at the same time. Watch these two dissimilar tastes become one new and unexpected flavor.

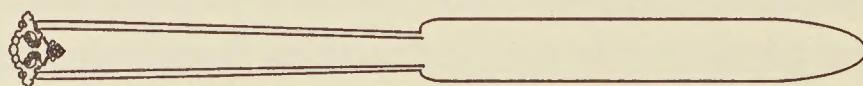
Autobiographical Postscript

I had been a cook for twenty years, but I was casting about, loose. I was vaguely dissatisfied. I liked what I did well enough (if you have to do something for a living feeding people is a pretty nice thing to do), but my options for advancement were stalled. I was happy enough being a line-cook, but I did not particularly want to assume the mantle of "chef" and run a kitchen. My reason for life was literature and the tenor of the times had shifted. The kitchen I worked in was a remarkable kitchen, but it had changed from a place where the coworkers' conversations included

philosophy and literature to a place where everyone talked about bicycles. I was (and still am) usually very private about my literary aspirations, but I was showing poems to a coworker. She said she'd love to see one "printed" sometime, like the broadsides at the local bookstore. I thought that was a fine idea, so the next time I saw poster artist David Lance Goines come through the restaurant I asked him how much it would cost to print a small broadside. He rolled his eyes. (I had no idea what I was asking.) He asked me instead if I knew how to print.

So I dropped by his studio one day and he taught me how to set lead type (and setting lead type taught me a lot about concision in versification). And then, after that magic moment when a press closes and the realm of ideas collapses into the real world, and the press opens again, my heart was gone. A fire was lit in me that still burns some twenty years later. I am a printer now, but I am still a cook.

Richard Seibert worked as a cook at Chez Panisse for fifteen years before David Lance Goines taught him how to print in 1993. Since then he has worked as a printer, both with David and with Peter Koch. His work may be seen at www.richardseibert.com and www.letterspressed.com.



NOTICE OF ANNUAL MEETING

Tuesday, October 21, 2014, 2 p.m.

The Book Club of California
312 Sutter Street, Suite 500, San Francisco

MAKING BOOKS & CHILI

by David Esslemont

I have an interest in books—I make books, I read books, I collect books, I love books! I have a hunger for books. You have an interest in books. We are not alone—for a Laroussian taste of these passions read Holbrook Jackson’s chapter “Bibliophagi or Book-eaters” in his *Anatomy of Bibliomania*.

I think chefs and book designers have a lot in common. We are designing, creating, directing—orchestrating—a wide range of different elements, and overseeing their production, often as multiples. Aren’t we both obsessed with detail, with the quality of the materials or ingredients, the production, the presentation and that perfect balance?

Simple, honest ingredients (like the Holy Trinity of tomatoes, garlic, and olive oil that I discovered in Italy—where I believe I learned to eat) offer much potential for the cook. Ink, paper, and words (or images) also offer the same opportunities for creative adventure in book form. A good book is a happy book, it will open and lie flat, and the arrangement of its contents will be logical and pleasing to the eye. A good dish will likewise present a balanced palate of color, texture, and flavors.

Variety and experiment have their place too. I’m thinking of the extraordinary dishes by chefs such as Simon Rogan and Heston Blumenthal, and books such as the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* and Matisse’s *Jazz*.

My passion for cooking is manifest in Chili—the recipe for my prize-winning chili in a series of woodcuts. Not content with store-bought ingredients I make everything from scratch: I grind the beef (raised by friends) and spices, and make stock and tomato sauce using home-grown produce and herbs. Toasted Ancho chiles give a rich, dark, brick-red, mahogany-colored sauce, tempered by the red tomatoes against which bright flecks of green, orange, and red peppers sparkle.

As always I created a deluxe binding, not in my preferred white goatskin, but in alum-tawed pig, (the leather was a swine to pare), which I blind tooled to create a white linen table cloth, the perfect setting for a bowl of chili garnished with spicy sour cream, scallions, and julienned Fresno, habanero, and jalapeno chiles.

Will I do another food-related book? Yes. I am surrounded by a culture of local food in Iowa, and this is becoming part of my culture, too—my culture of creativity and books. I have become a passionate locavore and it might be said that *agri-culture* too is now shaping my work since I began farming. Ever mindful of the market for my work, I find that chili is not as popular outside of North America—perhaps the British would prefer a curry recipe.

However the title of my next book is likely to be *Pizza*. It begins with clearing the ground of last years weeds, planting wheat, harvesting and grinding flour, building an adobe clay wood-fired pizza oven, growing tomatoes and basil, making mozzarella, and cooking a divine pizza. A universally popular dish, I hope the book will have global appeal.

This leads me to the absurd notion that I could grow an entire book on the farm: grow flax, make paper, harvest maple trees for woodblocks; pigments abound, the only stumbling block would be a varnish or vehicle for the inks—perhaps I could make linseed oil from the flax, and of course I would need half a dozen goats for the deluxe bindings.

Born in the north of England, David Esslemont is an artist, designer, printer, bookbinder, and publisher. He was Artistic Director of the University of Wales Gregynog Press from 1985–97 and has won many book design awards including the Felice Feliciano International Award for Book Design in 1991. In 2012 he won the Winneshiek Wildberry Winery's chili cook-off near his home in northeast Iowa, and his book Chili: A Recipe won the Printmaking Today "Innovation in printmaking" award at the 2013 Oxford Fine Press Book Fair. The Book Club of California is very fortunate to have a copy of this book in its collection. Illustration of cloves, below, by David Esslemont.



THE CENTENNIAL OF THE CLUB'S FIRST BOOK:
COWAN'S CALIFORNIA BIBLIOGRAPHY
by Gary F. Kurutz

This year the Book Club of California celebrates a momentous centennial, that of the publication of its first book in 1914. The Club launched its unmatched publication program with Robert E. Cowan's magisterial *A Bibliography of California and the Pacific West*. In so doing, the venerable bibliophilic organization set a precedent that guides the institution to this day. As articulated in its first Constitution and By-Laws, the Club will support "the occasional publication of books designed to illustrate, promote and encourage letters and book production." Publication number one, I might add, is included in that most prestigious and influential list of great California books, the *Zamorano 80* (number 23).

Fittingly, the Club's first author ranks as one of the more knowledgeable authorities ever on the subject of California history. Robert Cowan (1862–1942) was one of the first antiquarian booksellers to focus on California and the West, and he built collections for institutions and individuals across the country. Fellow bookseller Harold Holmes of San Francisco best summed up his bookselling prowess: "As a book dealer in Western Americana, Cowan's equal has not yet appeared." He acquired and sold collections that became the foundation Californiana collections at the Huntington Library, UCLA, and UC Berkeley (prior to the Bancroft Library). Cowan later became the William Andrews Clark, Jr. Memorial Library's first librarian.

With his vast background in selling and describing rare Californiana, Cowan gave many presentations to various historical, literary, and library groups and wrote seminal essays and bibliographies such as "*The Spanish Press of California (1833–1845)*" in the California Historic Genealogical Society Publication No. 111 (1903) and, with Boutwell Dunlap, *Bibliography of the Chinese Question in the United States* (1909). All of these activities formed a firm foundation for his great bibliography.

It is not exactly clear when Cowan and the Book Club decided to collaborate on their monumental publication. Founded in 1912, the Club was a fledgling organization with an energetic group of rare-book-loving

officers wanting to make a lasting contribution by publishing a book whose value would endure not only for the book's contents but also for its design. On June 18, 1913 at 5:15 p.m. at the Club's office in San Francisco's Phelan Building, the Board of Directors, headed by physician and former San Francisco mayor Dr. Edward Robeson Taylor, authorized Cowan to produce for them "a bibliography of books dealing with the history of California and the American Pacific West from the earliest writing on the subject to the San Francisco fire of 1906." Also on hand were such distinguished bibliophiles as Alfred Sutro, Albert Bender, Will Sparks, and James D. Blake. Printer John Henry Nash attended as a guest.

Publishing the bibliography was a risky undertaking for a newly formed volunteer organization, but the book established a precedent that has been upheld through every one of the Club's 232 titles: a devotion to the book arts combined with meaningful content. The bibliography would be a small folio printed handset on handmade paper with Goudy's Kennerley type. In the prospectus, the Club proudly touted the fact that "the making of the book will be under the personal direction of Mr. John Henry Nash." Originally, the Club contemplated an ambitious edition of five hundred copies at a cost of over \$6,000, but the directors wisely agreed to scale it back and publish only two hundred and fifty copies and to charge members the then-handsome price of \$20 per copy.

As prominent antiquarian bookseller and Book Club bibliographer David Magee pointed out in *The One Hundredth Book*, "It showed great courage and foresight on the part of those early directors to sponsor such a book." At the time of its publication, the Club's membership numbered fewer than one hundred, and collectors of Californiana were a rare breed. Furthermore, \$20 represented a stiff price, causing one member to wail that this was an outrageous charge for a glorified catalog.

Working furiously, Cowan completed the manuscript. With a sigh of relief, he wrote one of his best customers, E. D. Scholefied of the Royal Provincial Archives in Victoria, British Columbia, on October 15, 1913, that the text had been finished. The author worried, however, that the title was misleading, as it included the words "and the Pacific West," while concentrating solely on California. Furthermore, Cowan revealed that the bibliography would be selective, that is, feature only one thousand

titles boiled down from a list of seven thousand. The great richness of his bibliography derives not only from his selection but also from the over six hundred annotations he wrote. To annotate seven thousand books would preclude publication.

Cowan's knowledgeable notes make the book a delight to read, enlightening the reader with salient bibliographic points and memorable and sometimes amusing anecdotes concerning the author and the contents of a volume. For the first time, important books about our state's history were being described in one place. It was a biblio-Baedeker to California history. The fact that booksellers and librarians still quote from the annotations attest to their importance. Warren Howell, the great San Francisco bookseller, considered the book his "Bible" and always kept a copy at his elbow.

In his annotations, Cowan heaped praise upon Hubert Howe Bancroft's monumental thirty-nine-volume work. Several titles received lavish attention. For example, he wrote thirty-one fact-filled lines of text about the history of Charles P. Kimball's San Francisco directory for 1850 and included a page and a half of data on the California Historical Society's 1874 publication of Francisco Palóu's *Noticias de la Nueva California*.

Like a good book reviewer, Cowan, in his commentary, freely judged the value of a title and did not restrain himself in revealing the tone of an author's text. To illustrate, he wrote the following comment on Henry Huntley's *California: Its Gold and Its Inhabitants* (London, 1856): "Entertaining reading, tinctured occasionally by the mild sarcasm of an English baronet, whose dignity sometimes encountered a severe shock." For Franklin Langworthy's classic overland diary, *Scenery of the Plains, Mountains, and Mines* (1855), Cowan wrote, "A scarce book, and no doubt served its purpose; but it is a most dreary performance in literature."

When the completed bibliography appeared, the Book Club of California was rightly proud of this singular accomplishment, receiving two very satisfying letters of congratulations. On January 8, 1915, T. J. Cobden-Sanderson of Doves Press fame wrote, "I must write to thank you for the very beautiful book which you have been good enough to send me. It is as interesting as beautiful; I congratulate you and your printer and the author on the completion of a really great piece of work."

This gratifying letter was followed by more adulation. This time, the source was the greatest of all California historians, Hubert Howe Bancroft. This no doubt pleased the Club and Cowan, since the author made extensive use of Bancroft's expertise and collection. Bancroft sent the following on January 14, 1915: "I have gone carefully through your volume on the historical bibliography of California and I cannot too highly commend the work so unusual in so new a country."

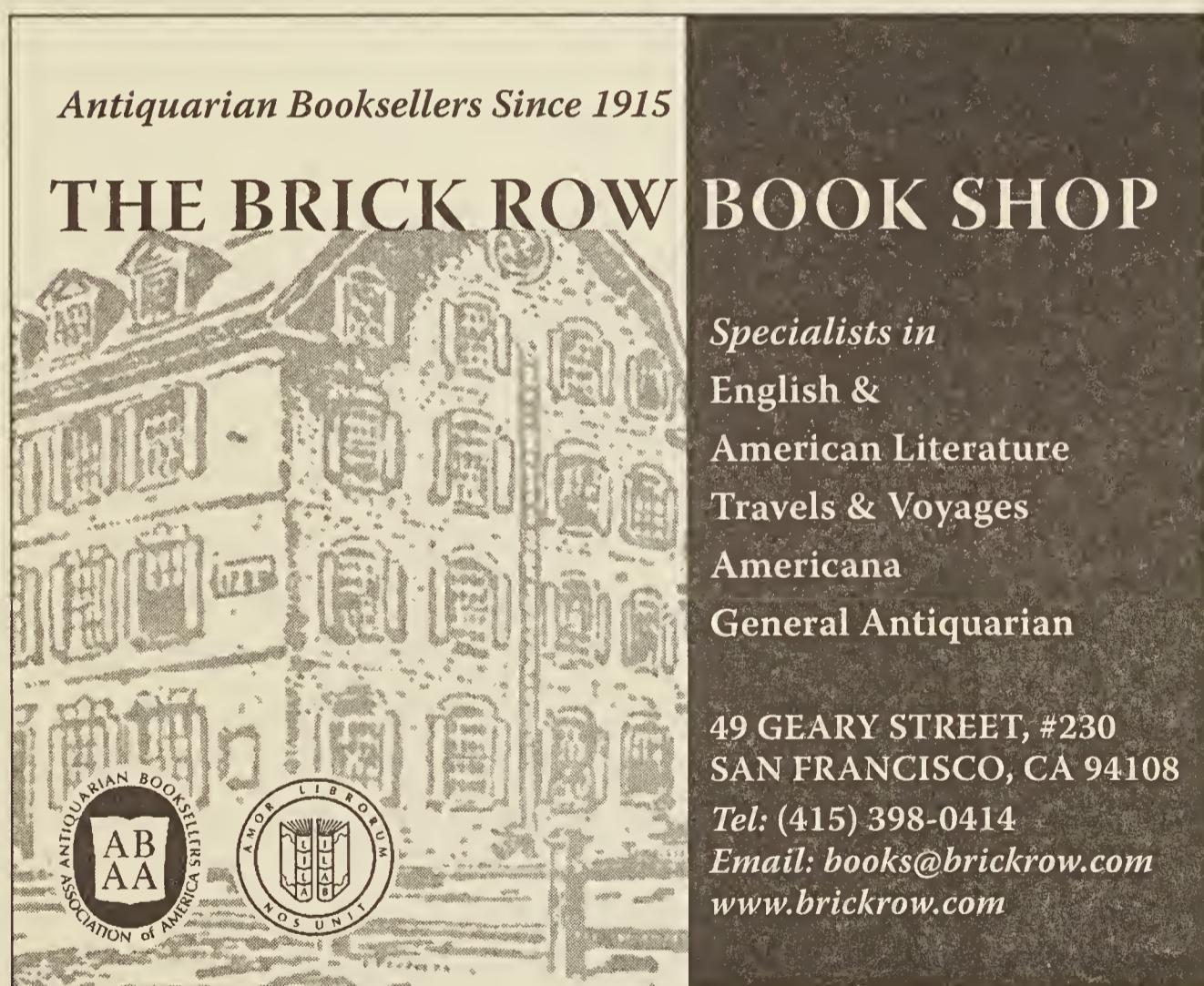
The Club sent out gift copies to Mayor James D. Phelan, and at least one copy for review to Dr. Herbert Eugene Bolton, University of California history professor and director of the Bancroft Library. Bolton, in turn, asked Bancroft Library curator Herbert Priestly to review the handsome volume for the prestigious *Southwest Historical Quarterly*. Much to the Club's and Cowan's chagrin, Priestly wrote a nasty review appearing in the January 1915 issue decrying the book's expensive price, deckled edges, and limitation of titles. Where were the books on Washington, Oregon, and Idaho?

Cowan retorted in an interview for the literary-social magazine *Town Talk*, noting that Priestley's "perspective was disturbed by a mental strabismus [squint]," and jabbed the reviewer by pointing out that since the university acquired Bancroft's great collection, it had been "consistently maintained in more or less helpless chaos." In a letter to the distinguished historian, Zoeth Skinner Eldredge, Cowan wrote, "The convolutions of this review are distinctly reptilian."

In 1930, Cowan, with the assistance of his son Robert Grannis Cowan, produced a second edition of three volumes that included five thousand titles. Many new titles had been published since 1914 and new information discovered on older titles. Printed and published by John Henry Nash, the new edition, however, sacrificed the sprightly annotations of the Book Club's 1914 edition. Including those would have required two or three more volumes. Consequently, the Club's first book remains an essential guide to the great books of California history up to 1906. In 1952, Long's College Book Company published a reprint of the 1914 edition with a superb biography of the author by Henry R. Wagner. The Club, unfortunately, did not renew the copyright. Wagner concluded his profile by stating that the Club's first book "was the best book Mr. Cowan

ever wrote." The Club itself deserves credit for bringing into print this handsome volume that combined erudition and fine printing, a tradition that continues to this day.

Gary F. Kurutz is *curator emeritus of special collections at the California State Library*. He is a past president of the Book Club of California and for many years served as chair of the Publications Committee. Kurutz is the author of several books and articles on California and western history including two BCC publications, *The California Gold Rush: A Descriptive Bibliography of Books and Pamphlets Covering the Years 1848–1853* and *An Essay on a Bibliography of California and the Pacific West, 1510–1906* by Robert E. Cowan.



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SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA SIGHTINGS

by Carolee Campbell

To walk through the fragrant windblown groves of eucalyptus on the La Jolla campus of U.C. San Diego is to discover the felicitous relationship that exists between the campus and the sea nearby. Continuing out of the grove and onto the sun-swept expanse of cement and grass one comes upon the Geisel Library, a glass aerie on concrete pedestals, posing so very much like an alien spaceship inhabiting the campus. This fact has not been lost on Hollywood. Several science fiction films have been shot using the library as backdrop.

Designed by William L. Pereira Associates in the late 1960s, Geisel is a Brutalist gem. Other Brutalist works include Boston City Hall and San Francisco's own Transamerica Building, with its pyramid-shaped tower piercing the skyline. Brutalism is a style of modern architecture that became popular in the 1960s and is characterized by monumental structures formed mostly from raw concrete, hence the term *béton brut* (raw concrete). While the pioneer of this style, Le Corbusier, comes from France, most of the iconic Brutalist structures are located in the United States.

The library is named after Theodor Seuss Geisel, creator of the beloved series of Dr. Seuss children's books, and his wife, Audry S. Geisel. It honors the couple's contributions to the library and their efforts to improve literacy. The Dr. Seuss Collection is comprised of original drawings, sketches, notebooks, manuscript drafts, and much, much more—8,500 items in all documenting the full range of his artistic achievements.

On May 5 a reception was held at Geisel in the Mandeville Special Collections Library. On display in the library's generous cases were sixty books selected for the San Diego Book Arts Fifth National Juried Exhibition. San Diego Book Arts is a nonprofit organization founded in 1996. It organizes exhibitions, offers workshops, lectures, and social events, and publishes a monthly newsletter. Organizing this yearly exhibition is a further example of their contribution to the book community.

The juror selected for this year's exhibition was book artist Sue Ann Robinson who is director of collections and exhibitions at the Long Beach

Museum of Art. She was charged with selecting the sixty books from 213 submissions and 700 digital images. Having done so myself, I know that the difficulty in selecting books for exhibition from photographs cannot be overemphasized. Sue Ann writes in her catalog essay, "...as a juror, I tried to distinguish those bookworks that were most successful in integrating content and structure and materials in a compelling aesthetic presentation." The presence of that threesome is always devoutly to be wished for.

I would say that there are basically four categories of book exhibitions in general: exhibitions of work drawn from a collection, private or public, selected by one or more curators; exhibitions where one curator chooses the exact books and book artists they want for the exhibition; juried exhibitions, in which the jurors are required to make an exhibit out of what books are submitted; and last, organizational membership shows—"come one, come all, all will be exhibited." The exhibition under discussion here falls into the third category. The jurors select the best from what they are given.

Which brings us to the bookworks themselves. From a craft and technical perspective, in the main, they were of a high order. Many of the structures were drawn from a spectrum of books that open or unfold in what used to be considered unconventional ways. We have seen so much of them over the last few decades now that they have become the convention in this genre. There were books as sculpture, books as jewelry, books showing cut-and-folded paper techniques, excavated books, tunnel books, portfolios and boxes of artwork (books?), flag books, and many accordion books. The artwork displayed within the books ranged widely. There was a shadow box filled with found items, a spiral-bound book of pockets filled with inkjet printed items, and there were laser-printed pages held between covers made from circuit boards. Many of the works were deftly and engagingly realized. A few were one-trick ponies. Unlike last year's exhibition sponsored by SDBA, it was notable to find that no work in the fine press tradition was included. Is it possible none was submitted?

All in all, the exhibition was a good example of the type of artists' books being made today in general. A few were of a very high caliber. Among that group was a book consisting of four deliciously enigmatic

photographs that were divided in half and mounted onto aluminum panels that separate, sliding apart on brass rails, half to the left, half to the right, revealing overlapping delicately tonal, surrealistic landscapes—blurred, as one might view the countryside from a fast-moving train. The object is held in a silk-covered box entitled *Voyages (en train)* created by French book artist and photographer Amandine Nabarra-Piomelli.

Kudos to Mandeville Special Collections Director Lynda Claassen for opening the gallery to the SDBA National Juried Exhibition each year. A catalog of the exhibition is available at www.sandiegobookarts.com.



Imagine, for a moment, that you are a turf-cutter harvesting peat for Irish home fires in a peat bog in Fadden More, a “townland” in the parish of Loughkeen, County Tipperary, Ireland. Imagine now that you are driving the mechanism that lifts the arm of the excavator. As it rises into the air you spy something peeking out of the rectangle of peat you just cut. You don’t know what it is but you know that it is something other than peat. That is what Eddie Fogarty spied on July 20, 2006.

On May 27, 2014 in the Lecture Hall of the Getty Research Institute in Los Angeles, a presentation was given to a small gathering of people, many of whom were Getty staff members. The lecturer was John Gillis, Senior Conservator of Manuscripts and Rare Books at Trinity College Library Dublin, and Conservator at the National Museum of Ireland. Gillis was there to tell the story of the discovery of the Faddan More Psalter, the remains of an illuminated vellum manuscript dating from the eighth century. This was the “something” that Eddie Fogerty dug up out of the peat bog in 2006. The find made international headlines as the first Irish manuscript discovered in over two hundred years and the first ancient manuscript ever found in a wetland environment.

The story Gillis told of the complex process of identification and conservation was of such high drama that we should have had bags of popcorn rather than pads and pencils. In conservation terms, many of the techniques employed were developed as work progressed, breaking new ground for the conservation of waterlogged vellum manuscripts. Descriptions of the condition of the find varied from “like lasagna” to “alphabet soup.”

The work began with finding a method for storing the manuscript safely while the conservation team decided what to do next. They ended up refrigerating it lying on its bed of wet peat from the site and covering it with silicon mylar and "cellocast" resin molded to its contours.

It took the next two-and-a-half years to painstakingly peel apart each folio. The condition of the folios varied from good to those in which only the outside frame of the folio remained, the rest having liquefied away. To the team's astonishment, however, they found that what was left behind from the folios in the worst condition were the written letter forms, intact, scattered every which way at the bottom of the working tray. The iron gall inks used in manuscript writing of that period had tanned the surface of the vellum, thus preserving each separate letter or partial letter—several thousand of them. In all, only fifteen percent of the entire manuscript was saved. The rest had gelatinized.

Early examination of the psalter revealed a small section of Psalm 83 as well as areas of an illuminated page. The text was written in insular Irish minuscule script, the same script as that of the glorious Book of Kells residing at Trinity College, Dublin. It was written by monks in the eighth century, as was the Faddan More Psalter.

The Faddan More psalter was found lying open on its original cover in the peat bog along with the remains of a leather bag. The cover was limp tanned leather with three large "buttons" on the flap. The binding generated much interest as a unique example of an early binding style that has not otherwise survived in Western Europe from this date. Another feature of the cover created great excitement. It was lined with papyrus. Drawing comparisons with book structures from lands as far away as Egypt, John Gillis raised provocative questions about the connections between Ireland and the desert monasteries of Egypt, adding substantially to the history of bookmaking and monastic life in early medieval Ireland.

He also speculated on how the psalter might have gotten into the bog in the first place. Viking raids began during the period when the psalter was created and monasteries were being looted of their precious holdings. It is possible the psalter had been purposefully hidden in the bog. Evidence was found at the site of hair from a large cowhide that might

have been used to obscure the book. Another possibility is that the psalter might have been used as a votive offering.

The Faddan More Psalter had rested in the bog for twelve hundred years. John Gillis reminded us that, if Eddie Fogarty's peat excavator had dug just a tad to the left or a tad to the right, their find—one that could cause the early history of the book to be rewritten—would have been fertilizing tulips.

An infinitely more detailed account of the work being done on the psalter, along with photographs, can be found online by searching: "The Faddan More Psalter, A Progress Update by Gillis & Read."

John Gillis will continue his work on the psalter for the next year at the Getty, investigating designs that were incised into the leather cover of the psalter.



If you've had your fill of manuscript reports, skip this next section. But be forewarned. This is about the extraordinary genius, Archimedes (287–212 B.C.), considered to be among the world's greatest classical thinkers, in the company of other great scientists such as Galileo, Newton, and Einstein. He was a mathematician, physicist, inventor, engineer, and astronomer. He is legendary for the feats he is said to have performed in defending his city of Syracuse, Sicily from the Romans, including using mirrors to direct the sun's rays and burn the boats of the enemy. Archimedes discovered the principle of Specific Gravity—that different types of things have different densities relative to water. It was, famously, his "Eureka" moment. He also discovered the Law of the Lever—that magnitudes are in equilibrium at distances reciprocally proportional to their weights; and he calculated to extraordinary accuracy the value of pi—the ratio of a circle's circumference to its diameter.

Okay, in truth, this report is about another prayer book. But hold on. It is about the only surviving treatises by Archimedes in Greek that exist today. They were found hidden beneath the text of a prayer book written by a Greek Orthodox monk in the thirteenth century. This monk had literally recycled a tenth-century document written in Constantinople (present-day Istanbul) by an anonymous scribe who copied Archimedes'

mathematical treatises in the original Greek onto parchment pages. (Parchment, a.k.a. vellum, is the prepared skin of sheep, goat, or calf.) In other words, the monk erased Archimedes' text by literally washing much of it away. (It was a great boon to history that he did a poor job of it.) He then cut the washed parchment pages along the centerfold, turned the leaves a quarter turn, and folded them in half. The leaves were then bound with the other leaves to create his prayer book, half the size of the original. This kind of recycled book is known as a palimpsest—from the Greek *palimpsestos* for “scraped again.” “Palimpsesting,” washing or scraping an original manuscript away, was commonplace hundreds of years ago when parchment and paper were hard to come by.

In the Boone Gallery of the Huntington Library in San Marino, California, twenty leaves from that oldest surviving copy of the treatises of Archimedes were put on display in the exhibition *Lost & Found: The Secrets of Archimedes*, March 15–June 22, 2014. The manuscript is known as the Archimedes Palimpsest. The importance of this manuscript is evidenced by a seven-hundred-page, two-volume set of books published in 2011 by the Cambridge University Press, *Archimedes Palimpsest*, Vol. I: *Catalogue and Commentary* and Vol. II: *Images and Transcriptions*. The exhibition was further heralded with a panel discussion, a symposium, and a private curator tour given by Avery Director of the Library, David Zeidberg.

Historically, the thirteenth-century prayer book had fallen into the hands of successive owners over hundreds of years, none knowing of the Archimedes underwriting until the late 1800s when an Archimedes scholar and the world's then-foremost philologist, Johan Ludvig Heiberg, saw the book in Istanbul and recognized seven Archimedes treatises underneath and at right angles to the prayers. He had discovered the oldest surviving source of Archimedes' writings. (Originally, Archimedes wrote his treatises on papyrus; these do not survive.) Heiberg transcribed what he could and had photographs taken, which turned out to be crucial to the ultimate discovery of the significance of the book.

Little is known about what happened to the prayer book during the twentieth century. It simply disappeared. During those decades the book deteriorated. Pages went missing, mold set in, and illustrations of the

Evangelists, forged to look medieval, were painted on some of the pages. It was in poor condition, having suffered a thousand years of weather, travel, and abuse. The text was filthy; it had been singed by fire and dripped on with wax.

In 1998 the prayer book was purchased at auction by an anonymous collector who then loaned it to the Walters Art Museum for conservation, imaging, and transcription. During the twelve years the Walters worked on the text, some eighty scientists and scholars in the fields of conservation, imaging, and classical studies engaged in the painstaking process of discovery.

Before imaging could begin, the manuscript had to be stabilized. It took four years alone simply to disassemble and remove adhesive from the folds, given its fragility. Once stabilized, the book went through a series of high-tech imaging processes to coax out the ancient text and diagrams. Teams of scientists combined different light sources—ultraviolet, strobe, and tungsten—to get the job done. Additional imaging, using powerful radiation at the Stanford Synchrotron Radiation Laboratory, showed the writing hidden beneath the forged illuminations.

All in all, it was twelve years' worth of conservation and research before the Archimedes Palimpsest was presented in 2011 in an exhibition, *Lost and Found*, at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore. The Huntington was the only other venue to host the exhibition. It included other manuscripts from the Walters and related objects from the Huntington's history of science collection and UCLA that helped contextualize the palimpsest. Multimedia displays and other material helped to round out the exhibition, showing the range of conservation and imaging techniques used during the twelve-year-long process of discovery.

Shy of spending \$250 for the exhaustive two-volume set on the Archimedes Palimpsest, one can acquire its down-home cousin, *The Archimedes Codex: How a Medieval Prayer Book Is Revealing the True Genius of Antiquity's Greatest Scientist* by Netz and Noel for \$27.50.

Carolee Campbell is the proprietor of Ninja Press, which is now in its thirtieth year, in Sherman Oaks, California. Campbell designs, prints, and binds each limited edition at the press. The entire Ninja Press archive is held at the Davidson Special Collections Department of the University of California at Santa Barbara.

NEWS FROM THE LIBRARY
by Henry Snyder

Last year I listed three items seen at the CODEX 2013 exhibition that would make important additions the library but for which we lacked the funds. The plea elicited one response that enabled the purchase of six items published by Russell Maret. I am pleased to report that a second responder, our valued member Dr. Robert A. Schnapper of Georgia, has purchased for us a copy of *The Persephones*, published by Ninja Press. We are proud to have an example of the fine work of Carolee Campbell, thanks to Dr. Schnapper. One more item on the wish-list awaits. Will another kind benefactor step forward to purchase for the library:

COSMOGONIE INTIME: An Intimate Cosmogony, printed by Felicia Rice at the Moving Parts Press. It includes five poems by French poet Yves Peyré, illustrated by Ray Rice with pen-and-ink drawings enriched with multiple colors using the pochoir or stenciling process. The 10 x 15 inch accordion-fold book extends to 18 feet and is housed in a paper slipcase and a cloth-covered box. \$2,200.

We all mourn the death of the Book Club's beloved librarian and colleague Barbara Land, who passed away in September 2013. Barbara was, of course, a serious book collector. Her two sisters, Helen and Frances, to whom she left her estate, have graciously permitted us to choose those items not present in the Club's collection which we believe would enhance it, resulting in a considerable gift. I have cataloged 391 items as of this writing and have probably another 100 to go. Quite a number bear the book plate of Albert Sperisen, Barbara's predecessor and colleague. The items range widely but are mainly concerned with the fine presses of California and the West, and the art of the book. There are several unique items which are particularly important to the Club's collection. A packet of ephemera produced by Grover Sherwood was sent by his wife to Donovan McCune at the latter's request. Grover also sent the typescript of a talk he delivered on the Grabhorns. Donovan bound up the ephemera in a handsome quarter leather volume. Laid in are the talk as well as letters between Donovan and Katherine Sherwood regarding the materials. A slipcase contains a copy

of *Growing New Roots* by Claire Leighton, published by the Book Club in 1976. In addition there are two matching chemises. One contains a separately mounted set of the fourteen illustrations for the book, and the other holds a packed portfolio of correspondence from Leighton and ephemera relating to the book. There is a hardbound copy of David Magee's *Two gentlemen from Indiana* (the Grabhorn brothers), which was issued in paper wrappers. In another small slipcase we found a copy of Lawrence Clark Powell's *Ex-Libris: Notes on My Family's Bookplates* (1984). Inspired by this example Albert Sperisen took a small blank notebook and pasted in all the various notebooks he had employed over the years together with short typescript notes on each. One had been designed by Jane Grabhorn, another by Robert Grabhorn. Of the latter he commented there were only three examples printed. He printed a cover title for it, *Albert's Bookplates 1929-1978 (A parody)* [sic]. In an "Introduction (Apology)," Sperisen writes, "This cheap 'imitation of a collection of Personal Bookplates' was suggested by Lawrence Clark Powell's recent privately printed book." As Barbara would say, there are many "goodies." We are immensely grateful to her two sisters and will cherish these wonderful additions to the collection that honor Barbara's memory.

Albert Sperisen's nephew, James, has sent us a packet of papers relating to the production and publication of *Bayside Bohemia* by Gelett Burgess, published by the Book Club in 1954. Norman McKnight has given us eight John Henry Nash publications. George Fox continues to turn up items of interest, which he donates to the Club. The most recent is *Private Angelo* by Eric Linklater. The imprint says, merely, "Privately printed." The Colophon tells all, and why it is an important addition to our collection: "Of this book...2000 copies were printed at Christmas 1957 for Sir Allen Lane and Richard Lane by McCorquodale & Co Ltd. London.... The book was composed entirely without metal type: it is the first to have been produced in Great Britain by means of photocomposition on the Intertype Fotosetter."

We are grateful for the support of our stalwart volunteers, Kitty Luce, Parvaneh Abbaspour, Norman McKnight, and Mark Knudsen. Norman and Mark are deep in the process of organizing ephemera. They began by sorting out our large collection of Moxon keepsakes by the printer.

Then they tackled the ephemera of Lawton Kennedy. Now they are immersed in Roxburghe Club announcements and keepsakes. Barbara Land bequeathed her nearly complete collection. We are custodians of the Club's own archive. And we acquired many other items by purchase or gift over the years. We are sorting them all out and will eventually catalog each piece. One set will be available in the library. A second set will be stored in another location as an archival set. Where third copies exist they will be given to the San Francisco Public Library.

In addition we welcome and invite members to volunteer their time to the library. There is a myriad of tasks to perform. These include organizing, shelving, maintaining files, sorting ephemera, and, above all, cataloging. Please contact Henry Snyder at hslnyder@earthlink.net or (510) 418-4234 (cell) if you would like to make a contribution to the library or serve as a volunteer.

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NEWS & NOTES

Developing the Fine Printing and Bookmaking Future by Anne W. Smith

As part of the Centennial pledge to “do more good with more style” the Book Club of California pursues interactive trade discussions that invigorate contemporary achievement in fine printing and bookmaking. The priorities adopted by the Board of Directors for our 2014-2017 Strategic Plan will incorporate input resulting from a variety of sources, including a Bookmakers’ Congress convened at Club quarters on June 30, 2014.

The purpose of the congress was “to stimulate thinking and action about current issues of interest to printers and bookbinders as well as their affiliates and supporters in today’s fine print community.” Some twenty-five members of that community, from masters of their trade to emerging sole proprietors, as well as collectors and catalogers of books, provided individual perspectives for the occasion.

Talk focused on issues in general and the Book Club’s role in particular. Fresh ideas were saluted, thoughtful questions were raised, and a remarkable variety of actions were proposed. Here are some notes from the meeting:

The quality of our content should be as high as the objects we produce.

What are the lessons learned about which books sell and which languish? Is there, should there be, a Book Club of California “brand”? Is it important for the Book Club to educate its members about purchasing and collecting, and increase the percentage of member buyers? Shouldn’t a transnational audience be a significant target? What do non-California members want?

Our community is larger than we think it is.

Concerning means of outreach and networks, participants talked about the point of entry for engaging new audiences in the trade (i.e.

typography related to coding), unique uses of old tools for the tech industry and revisiting the uses of classic machines, development of operating finances beyond the usual circle (i.e., Kickstarter), aligning with a larger community, and how to partner with classic arts organizations (e.g. San Francisco Opera) for outreach events. Each of the topics could have led to an extended discussion; each ought to be carefully considered in discussion of ongoing and new strategies.

The gist of the congress was that the Club would be well-served to function as an advocate to maintain the high quality of bookmaking so vital to its members. One master bookbinder stated that the Book Club's big contribution is that it encourages the book as a totality—promoting the book as a whole object. The comment resonated perfectly amid an atmosphere of convivial candor.

Taking the discussion into account, BCC Board and staff hope to have a Strategic Plan update completed early this fall.

Opening Remarks at the Book Club of California's
Bookmakers' Congress, June 30, 2014
by Peter Koch

Just one month ago I spent the day attending a John Ruskin conference at the Hillside Club in Berkeley (a club founded in 1896 by a group of Berkeley women dedicated to the principles of the rustic and simple architecture of Bernard Maybeck) where we were addressed by the Master of the Guild of St. George and several other eminent Ruskin authorities.

While listening, I was clearly reminded of our own Club's original commission to maintain the ideals that grew from the same root sources of philosophic and craft-oriented inspiration as those proclaimed by John Ruskin, William Morris, and the private press movement that flourished in Europe and America from the latter part of the nineteenth century until yesterday. I hesitate to say that the traditions of fine printing are flourishing today because as I look around me I see fewer and fewer books being produced that I can point to and say, "Now that is a finely printed book made by a master printer at his press and workshop."

This reminder came at a moment when I was actively despairing of the scarcity of master printers who are adequately trained in the rigorous disciplines of typography, book design, printing, and bookbinding, and in whose hands we can trust the work that will, in the future, carry forward our rich traditions of fine and artisanal bookmaking.

I especially enjoyed the exhortatory lecture delivered at the conference that afternoon by Jim Spates, professor and member of the Guild of Saint George, on the *Seven Lamps of Architecture*, a book in which Ruskin elaborates his aesthetic and moral philosophy in relation to building and architecture. Upon reading the book, I found that the *Seven Lamps* apply neatly to the practice of making of books and to our current state of deplorable uniformity in mass-manufacturing methods. In fact, manufacturing is a bit of a misnomer since the hand plays such a small part in today's printing plant.

Ruskin's Seven Lamps—Sacrifice, Truth, Power, Beauty, Life, Memory, and Obedience—are all clearly designed to illuminate and celebrate the joy of working by hand. Morris, following Ruskin, remarked that as time passes and more and more of the lamps are extinguished, the less the results of building promote life, and the more they resemble death. Little has changed in that sphere since Morris & Co. flourished.

The lamp of Sacrifice is a splendid description of the spiritual nature of work. Ruskin says of sacrifice that it is the excess of spirit and the generosity of the worker that lights the lamp of sacrifice. When we put that extra 30 percent into the required 80 percent of effort, we are giving of ourselves. We make that gift of ourselves and our spirit to our neighbors and friends. And it is that gift that creates the bond of generosity and thanks between the maker and the consumer of the work. Without that extra effort, that sacrifice, the work suffers. Without generosity, the result is crabbed and depleted.

I found the example that Mr. Spates quoted from a novel entitled *Buried Prey* by John Stanford quite instructive: "Lucas had gone in and out of the Minneapolis City Hall probably ten thousand times during his career, and always marveled at how the original architects had managed to contrive a building that was at once ugly, inefficient, cold, sterile, charmless, and purple. And yet they had!"

He paired the above quote with another from an essay on Ruskin by Ian Jeffrey: "Ruskin's idea was that in worthwhile architecture no two modules, panels or carved ornaments should ever be the same. If they are slightly dissimilar it is a sign that they have been made by hand and not by machine, which is a good thing and acknowledges the *workman as a creator*. Irregularity also implies change, which Ruskin valued above stasis and the perfection which destroys expression, checks exertion and paralyzes vitality."

I find that the "Workman as a Creator" is a deep and still revolutionary concept when it is applied to the whole of life. How many workers on the assembly lines producing our cell phones are acting as fully empowered individuals endowed with the mysteries of creation, destruction, and energy? How can the architects, engineers, and carpenters who build big-box malls exercise their human attributes of imperfect wisdom and the fleeting nature of beauty while installing the drywall? How can their work be joyful and express the uniqueness of each decision and every move?

I have come to appreciate the minute observable differences in inking and impression that are evident in the hand-printed book. The look of worn type, the imperfections of hand sewing—all bear the marks of a human presence. I feel that the perfection of which high-speed printing machines are capable can, under certain conditions, be highly overrated. Yes there are reasons for verisimilitude and accurate depiction if you want copies and reproductions, but there are also many occasions when imperfection and the mark of the human hand and eye are beautiful, transcendent, and even preferable.

The conditions under which perfection may be considered overrated or even inappropriate are the occasions that call for work by an artisan for a client or patron who wishes the work to express the joy of workmanship, a generous spirit, and that rare quality which approaches beauty. Simple things like doors, sugar bowls, and books.

It is occasions such as these that we should seek to multiply. We can leave the perfectly machined reproduction to the trade in facsimiles and virtual copies.

I believe there is a hunger for beauty that we underestimate and by underestimating, we send signals (and money) to all the wrong places, while, as artisans and connoisseurs, we suffer a self-imposed martyrdom.

The points that were consistently forwarded during the day-long series of lectures on Ruskin and his philosophy of art and architecture were clear:

- ☞ That the making of things should be enjoyable and the work should vouchsafe the craftsperson his or her individuality, knowledge, and the opportunity to put something extra and personal into his or her work, the something more that celebrates humanity's joy in good work and workmanship.
- ☞ That the perfection of the machine is not in itself a good and to seek of craftsmen and women the machine's perfection is to dehumanize them.
- ☞ That the irregularity and idiosyncracy of the gothic cathedral (as a prime example) is infinitely more enjoyable an experience precisely because the humans employed in the making of it left their mark in the stones.

By taking into account these premises and applying them to the making of books we soon arrive at the sad and sorry conclusion that books that rival the beauty of manuscript and the early printed books of the Renaissance are no longer being made except on the rarest of occasions in the workshops of only a few dedicated designer/printer/binders who, resisting the lure of the quick and easy way, insist on exploring the boundaries of the imperfect human condition by working with durable artisanal materials while utilizing methods of hand-craftsmanship and hard work.

I was happily reminded that day of why the Book Club was founded:

- ☞ To promote the values of artisanship and the requirements of the sophisticated individual reader/writer/worker/collector over and above the power of the machine that so entirely dehumanizes work and maximizes profit.
- ☞ To protect the values of the perennial philosophy that Ruskin and Morris could understand and applaud today.

☞ To insure that in the future there will be a voice that speaks for the individual artist and for the joy of thinking and working without unplugging the imagination.

Upon leaving the conference I returned home (a short walk up the hill) to read Ruskin on the Lamp of Memory:

All the stamped metals, and artificial stones, and imitation woods and bronzes, over the invention of which we hear daily exultation—all the short, and cheap, and easy ways of doing that whose difficulty is its honor—are just so many new obstacles in our already encumbered road. They will not make us one bit happier or wiser—they will extend neither the pride of judgment nor the privilege of enjoyment. They will only make us shallower in our understandings, colder in our hearts. We have certain work to do for our bread, and that is to be done strenuously; other work to do for our delight, and that is to be done heartily: neither is to be done by halves or shifts, but with a will; and what is not worth this effort is not to be done at all.... There is dreaming enough, and earthiness enough, and sensuality enough in human existence without our turning the few glowing moments of it into mechanism; and since our life must at the best be but a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanished away, let it at least appear as a cloud in the height of Heaven, not as the thick darkness that broods over the blast of the Furnace, and the rolling of the Wheel.

These words, written in the thick of the industrial revolution, echo justly today in the midst of our own digital revolution.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Dear *QN-L* Editor,

We have had our new editor for several issues now and it seems appropriate to comment on the good, the bad, and the ugly while also providing a bit of other commentary. I regret to say however that there is no bad and certainly no ugly. The transition to Peter Koch has been seamless, likely aided and abetted by Georgie Devereux. Peter's two-part series, "What is Fine Printing Anyway," showcased Peter's skill as an author; it was very nicely done—light, informative, and enjoyable reading. But the article was most notable for the fact that he did not place himself or his press in the text, which he could have done quite easily considering his many contributions to fine press printing. Not including himself in the text showed a gracious and humble side of him I would not have expected; I've not known Peter to be especially humble. Nice yes, but humble? In this case, his being so worked.

Peter's series left me with the impression that fine printing—the artistry of the book—is on the rise and in the good hands of a growing cadre of printers. Well, yes and no. Yes in that fine printing today is stupendously glorious but no in that such printing has not ascended, it has perhaps just shifted a bit with the help of technology. I've been collecting for many years and have never experienced a drop in top-of-the-line printers, designers and artists, their skills or the stunning beauty of their work. I have often rued the fact that I am a man of modest means and as such, have to pass on most of what's out there on the marketplace.

We BCC members do have a relatively small community. In almost any *QN-L* issue I read of printers whose work I know of and in many cases, have samples of in my collection. They range from the Grabhorns, to Ritchie, Everson, Rice, Price, Koch, Reagh, Wagener, among others, and now to the wonderful Russell Maret. The talent out there in the world remains simply amazing. Sometimes this small community of ours seems to breed an incestuous relationship—in a good way of course. For example, Part II of Peter's "What is Fine Printing Anyway" article mentions Carolee Campbell's *The Real World of Manuel Cordova*. Then Peter's article is followed by an interview with Carolee Campbell about her work

on BCC Publication #233, *Poetry at the Edge: Five Contemporary California Poets*. A coincidence perhaps? I don't think so. Another example of our close community was Bo Wreden's article "Like a Moth to a Flame" in the Spring 2014 *QN-L*. Kind of sad in a way, thinking of Peter Howard's books being picked through. Reminded me of the big sell-off after Burton Weiss died. The down-side of having friends is losing them.

I do have one bit of bibliophilic interest for our members. On page 100 of the Summer 2014 *QN-L* you saw the ad placed by Michael Broomfield seeking assistance in his work developing a new Robinson Jeffers bibliography to be published by "a leading publisher of bibliographies" (whose name will be instantly recognized by all). Our members and staff do collect Jeffers and should read Michael's ad again to see what information they may be able to share with him. I guess this request amounts to another ad in the *QN-L* but if I can sneak it by maybe it will run.

My last comment is a request. Yes, I know we are the Book Club of California, but bear in mind that many of us are not in California, and a goodly portion of those aren't even close to California. Any mid-America or East Coast connections (articles, events, books, exhibitions) appearing or reported in the *QN-L* will be appreciated.

So, to Georgie and Peter: Sally forth and do good things for us. May you live well and long.

Sincerely,
Allen Mears
McLean, VA

Dear Editor,

I write to compliment you on the Summer issue of the Book Club *Quarterly*. My aim in reading any journal is to keep up with the latest news of people and topics I care most about. I also appreciate being introduced to new issues and practitioners. The article on the fate of the book arts, the interview with Carolee Campbell, the excerpts from the talks by the Oscar Lewis Award recipients, the review of "For The Love of Letterpress," spoke of what is going on in the world of the book now, the

kind of work that is being made now. I love seeing the *Quarterly* diving into the dialogue that is going on among long-term and new practitioners of the book arts.

Felicia Rice
Santa Cruz, CA

ERRATUM: The entry on the cover of the Summer 2014 *Quarterly News-Letter*, “In Memoriam: Richard Harlan,” should have read “In Memoriam: Robert Harlan”.

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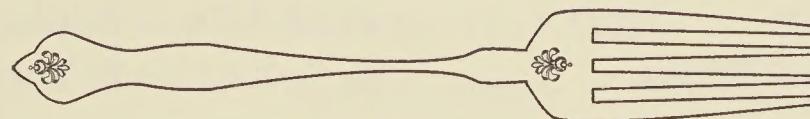
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